



# Student behaviour and behaviour policy in primary schools

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# Overview

- **Policy context**
- **Previous research**
- **Student behaviour**
- **Overall level of discipline**
- **Types of discipline used**
- **Limitations**
- **Conclusions**



# Policy context

- **Primary and second-level schools in Ireland are required to have a code of behaviour (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000).**
- **Policy concern about behaviour within second-level education led to the Task Force Report on Student Behaviour (2006).**
- **NEWB issued guidelines for schools (2008) in developing a code of behaviour, which emphasised:**
  - Importance of a whole-school approach
  - Emphasis on reinforcing positive behaviour
  - Encouraged involvement of teachers, parents, and students in developing the code



# Previous research

- Existing research in Ireland and internationally has focused on student behaviour within second-level schools.
- Main finding relates to a significant gender gap in levels of misbehaviour.
- Higher levels of misbehaviour in schools with a concentration of disadvantage (David, 2010, on the UK; Smyth et al., 2006, on Ireland).
- Disproportionate use of some forms of punishment, e.g. suspension and exclusion, with particular groups of students (US research).



# Previous research (2)

- **Lack of research on factors influencing school disciplinary policy**
- **Findings on the effectiveness of disciplinary approaches:**
  - Having more rules predicts *more* disruptive behaviour (Arum, 2003; Way, 2011)
  - Key issues in influencing student behaviour are perceived legitimacy of those rules and positive teacher-student relations (Way, 2011); consistency in implementation of rules and care/support for students (Gregory et al., 2010)
  - Student perceived safety levels are higher in schools that are seen as strict and fair (Arum, 2003).



# Why is disciplinary climate important?

- **For individuals, misbehaviour is associated with lower grades and higher chances of early school leaving.**
- **Disciplinary problems within the school and disruption within the classroom are linked to lower student test scores (Arum et al., 2012).**
- **All else being equal, achievement levels are higher in schools that are 'strict but fair' and have less negative teacher-student interaction (Smyth, 1999).**



# Data

- **Primary school data**
- **Multilevel data from GUI Wave 1 Child Cohort (at 9 years)**
- **8,568 children, sampled through schools**
- **Principal information – forms of discipline**
- **Individual level – teacher report of child behaviour (SDQ Conduct subscale)**



# Research Questions

- **Do different types of primary school vary in levels of misbehaviour among their students?**
- **Are these differences related to the gender and social composition of students in the school?**
- **What measures are used by schools to address student misbehaviour and to what extent do these behaviour policies differ by school type and student intake?**



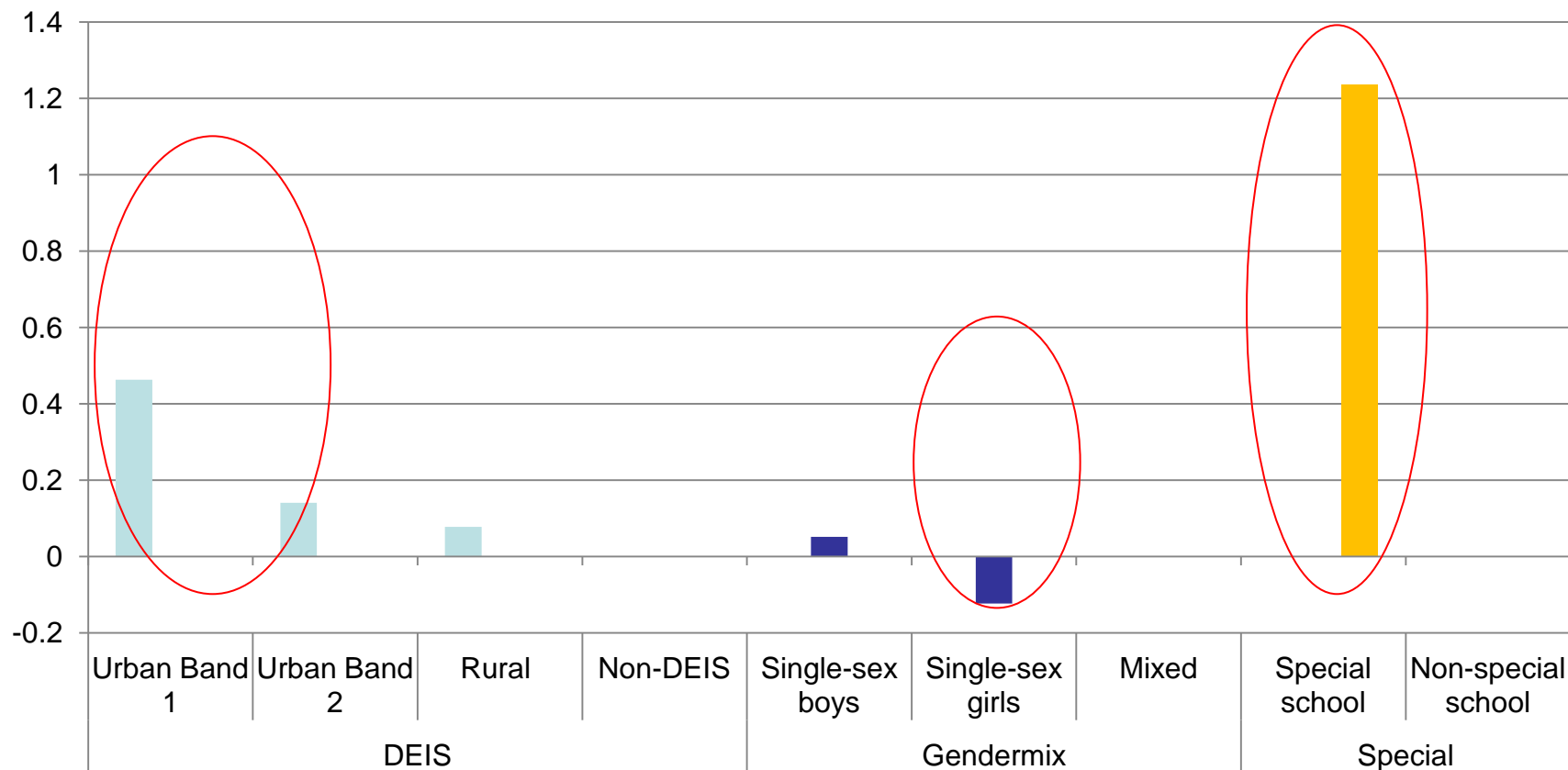


# Variables

School level:	Child level:
DEIS status	Child gender
Gender mix	Social class
Private school	Mother's education
Special school	Household income quintile
Language medium	Lone parent household
Oversubscribed school	Child learning disability
Principal gender	



# Child behaviour by school characteristics





# Child behaviour by child characteristics

## Variation in student misconduct by child

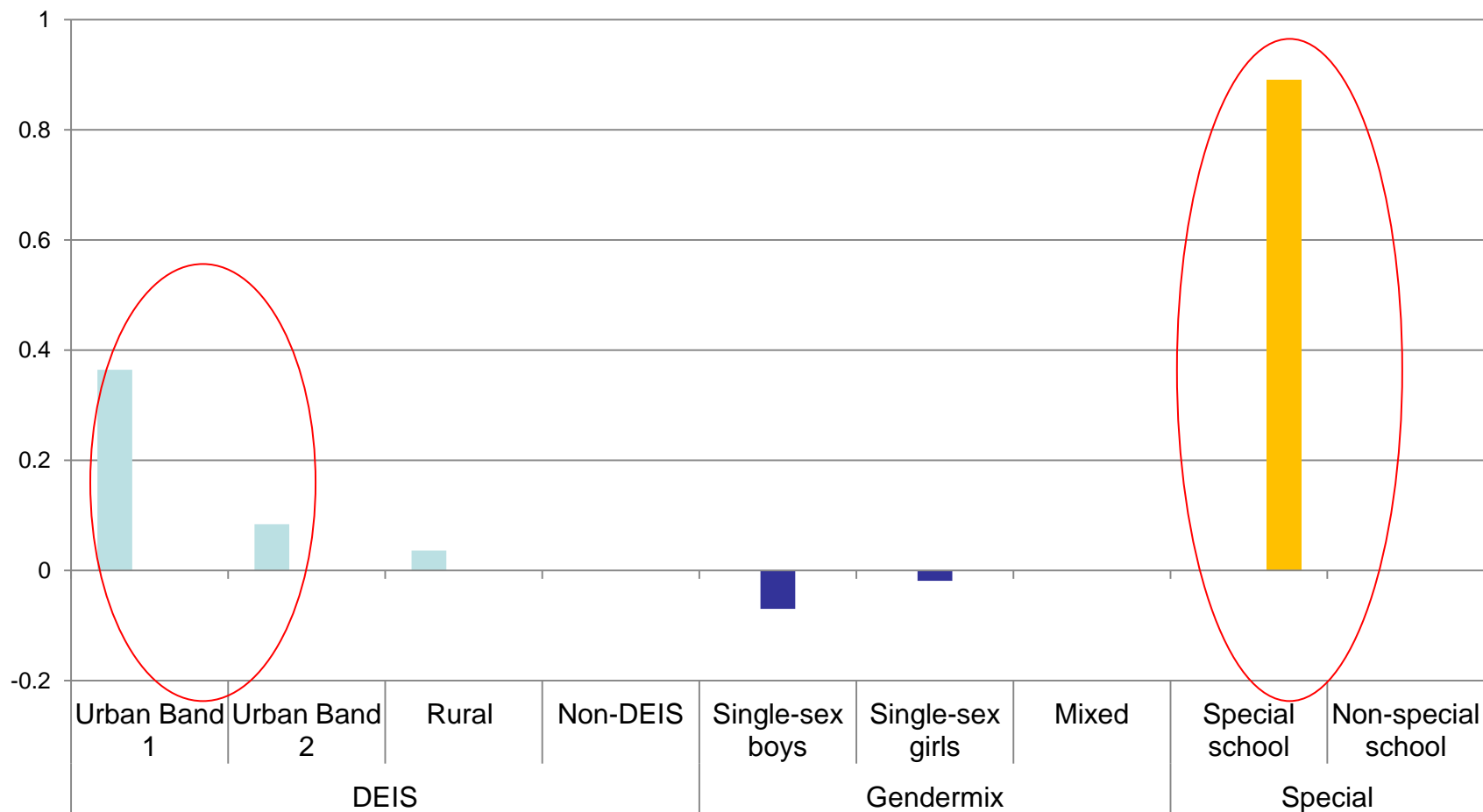
### characteristics:

- **Lower for girls**
- **Higher for children with mothers of lower education, lower income households, non-employed households, lone parent households, learning disability**



# Child behaviour by school characteristics

*(taking account of individual characteristics)*





# School Discipline

To what extent are the following forms of discipline used in your school?

Extra classwork

Suspension

Extra homework

Detention

Writing of lines

Exclusion from sports or other popular activities

Verbal report to parents

Cancellation of popular lesson e.g. art

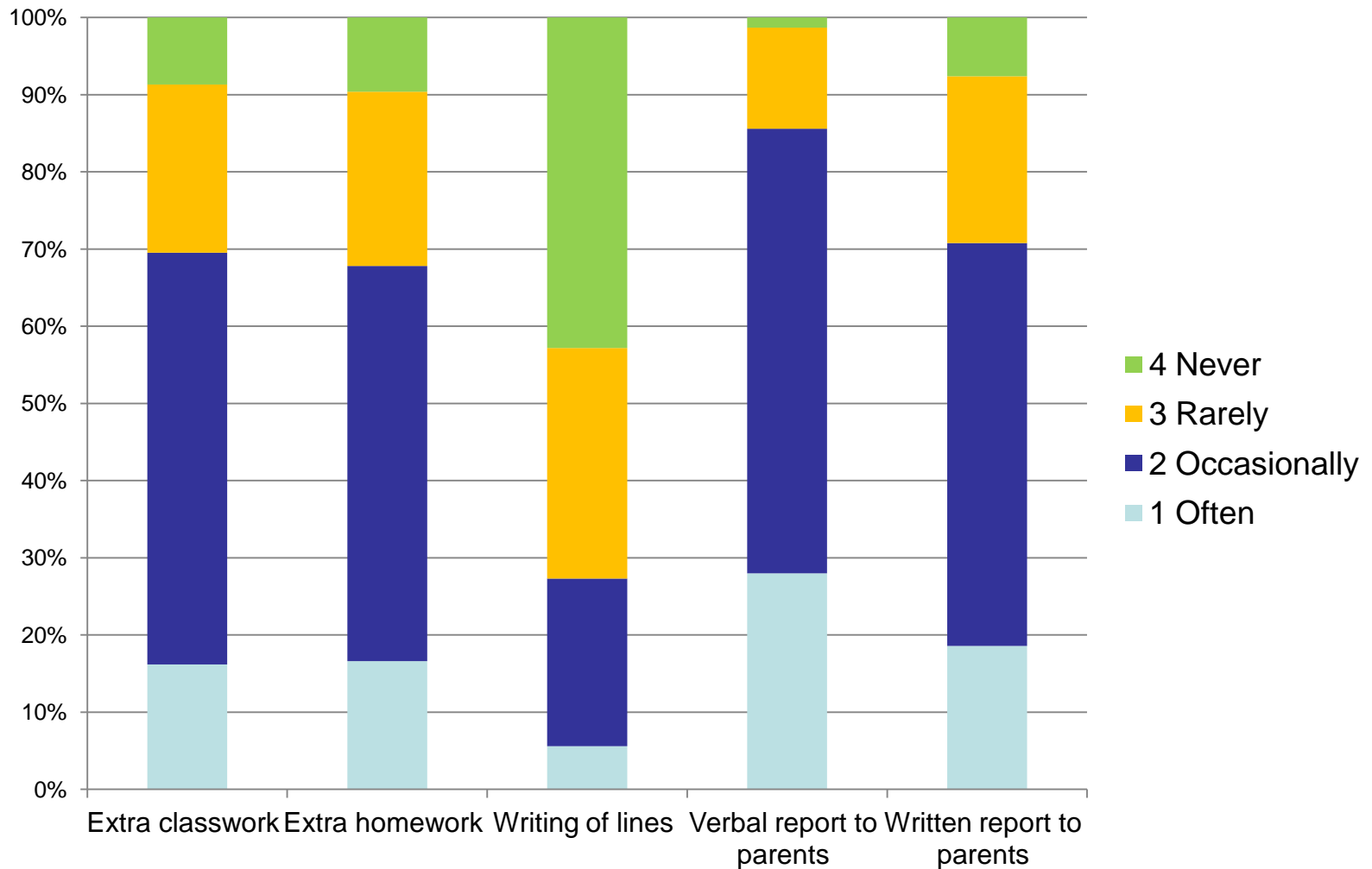
Written report to parents

Warning card system

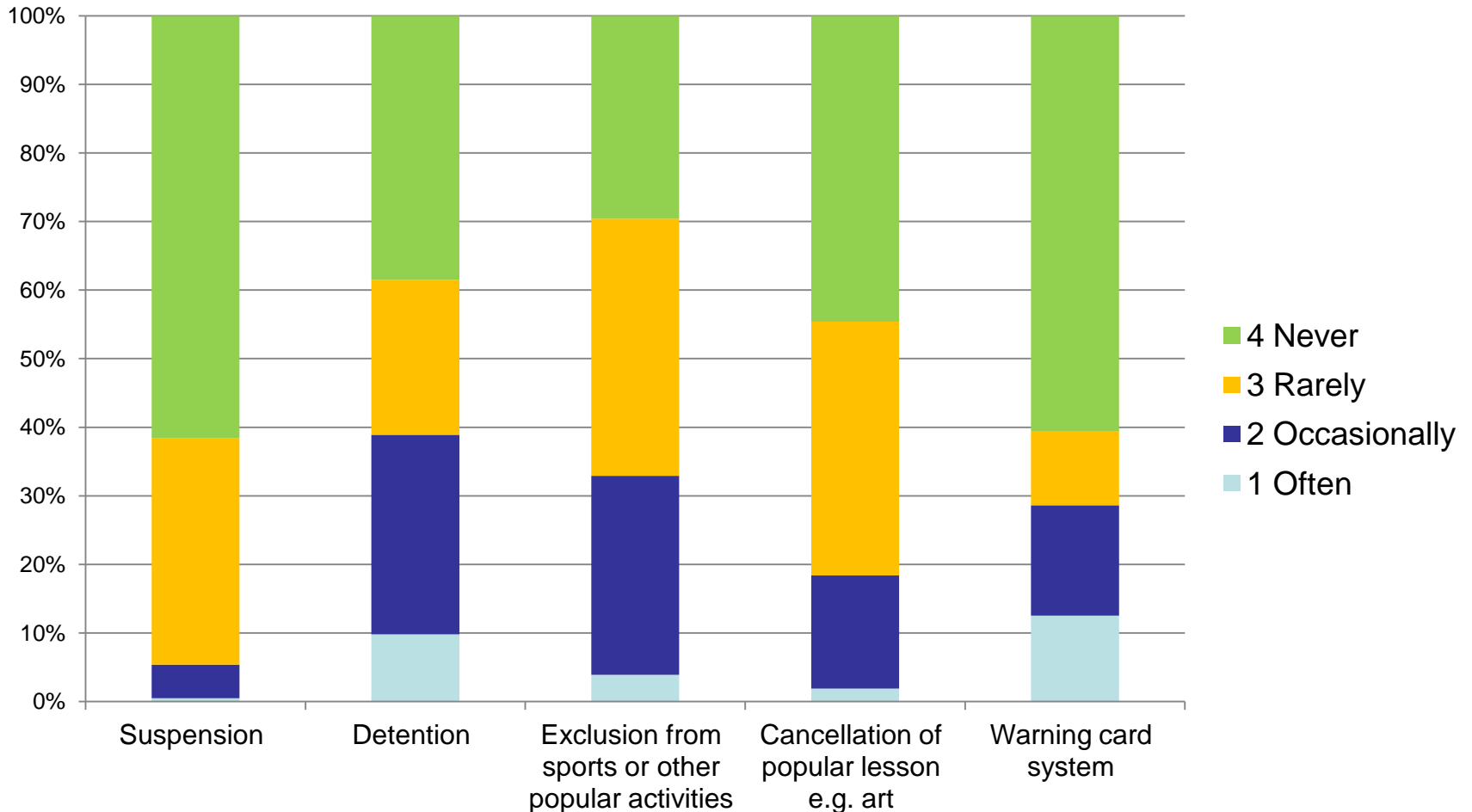
Expulsion

Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Often

# School Discipline

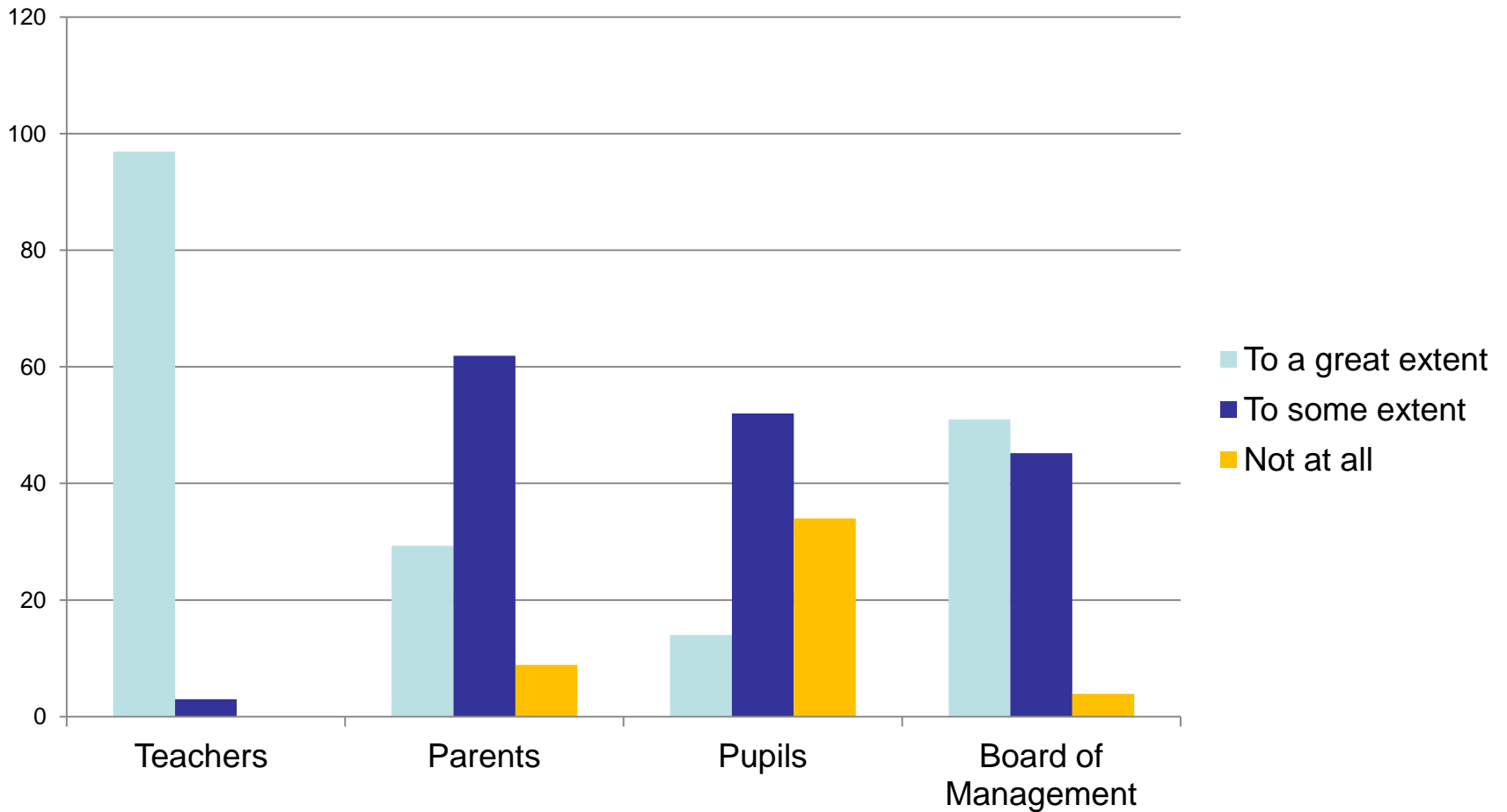


# School Discipline





# Involved in policy







# Overall level of discipline

- **Discipline items were summed to give an overall index of number and frequency of use**
- **To what extent do these behaviour policies differ by school type and student intake?**



# Overall discipline by school characteristics

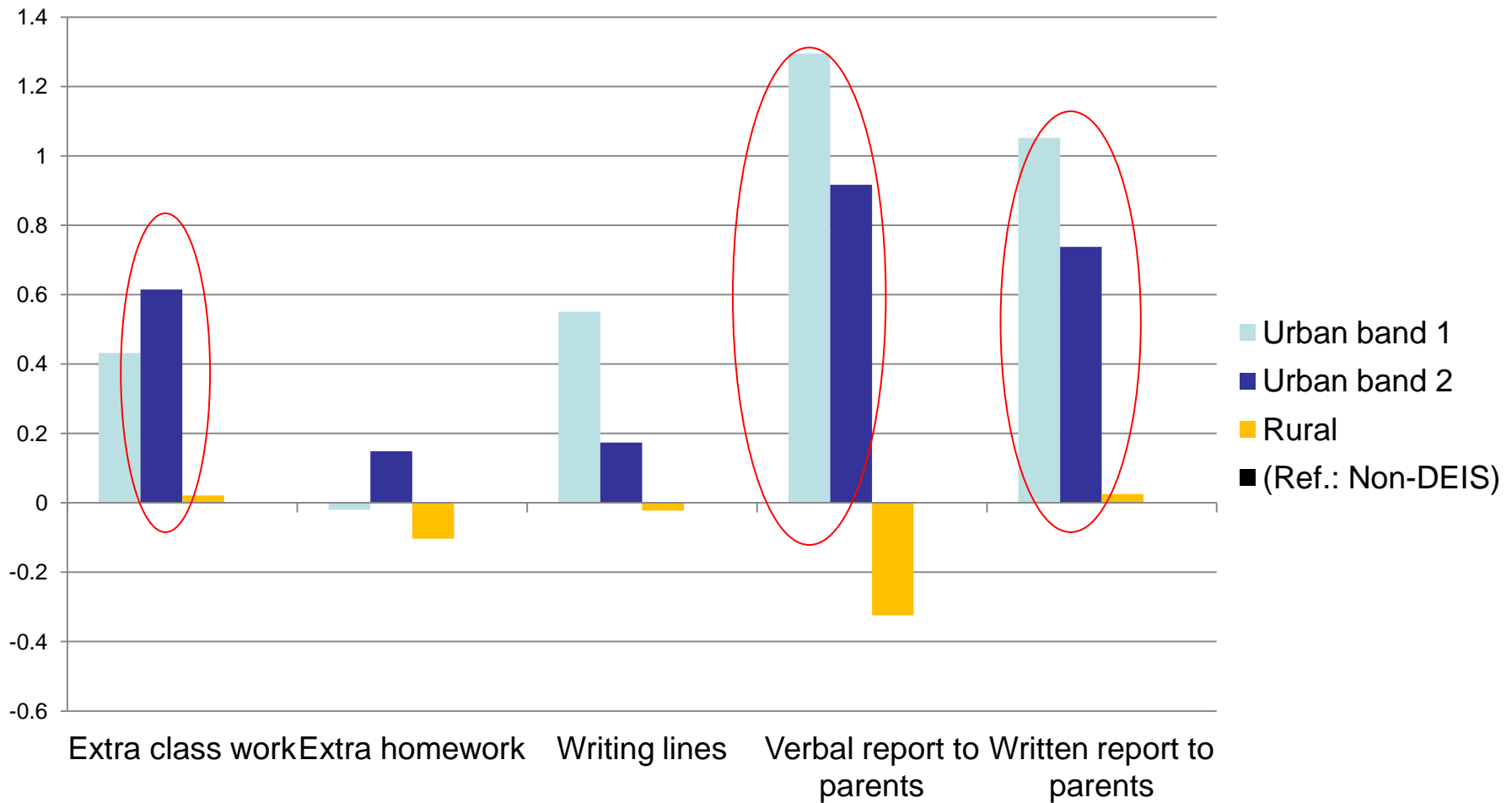
		Scale	Sig
Constant		1.988	
Emot /Beh problems:	<10%	0.114	**
	10-25%	0.171	**
	>25%	0.230	**
	(Ref.: None)		
DEIS status:	Urban band 1	0.305	***
	Urban band 2	0.152	*
	Rural	-0.078	
	(Ref.: Non-DEIS)		
Gender mix:	Single-sex boys	0.186	***
	Single-sex girls	-0.251	***
	(Ref.: Coeducational)		
Private school		0.032	
Special school		-0.249	*
Language medium:	Gaelscoil	0.064	
	Gaeltacht	-0.193	*
	(Ref.: English medium)		
Oversubscribed school		0.057	±
Male principal		0.046	



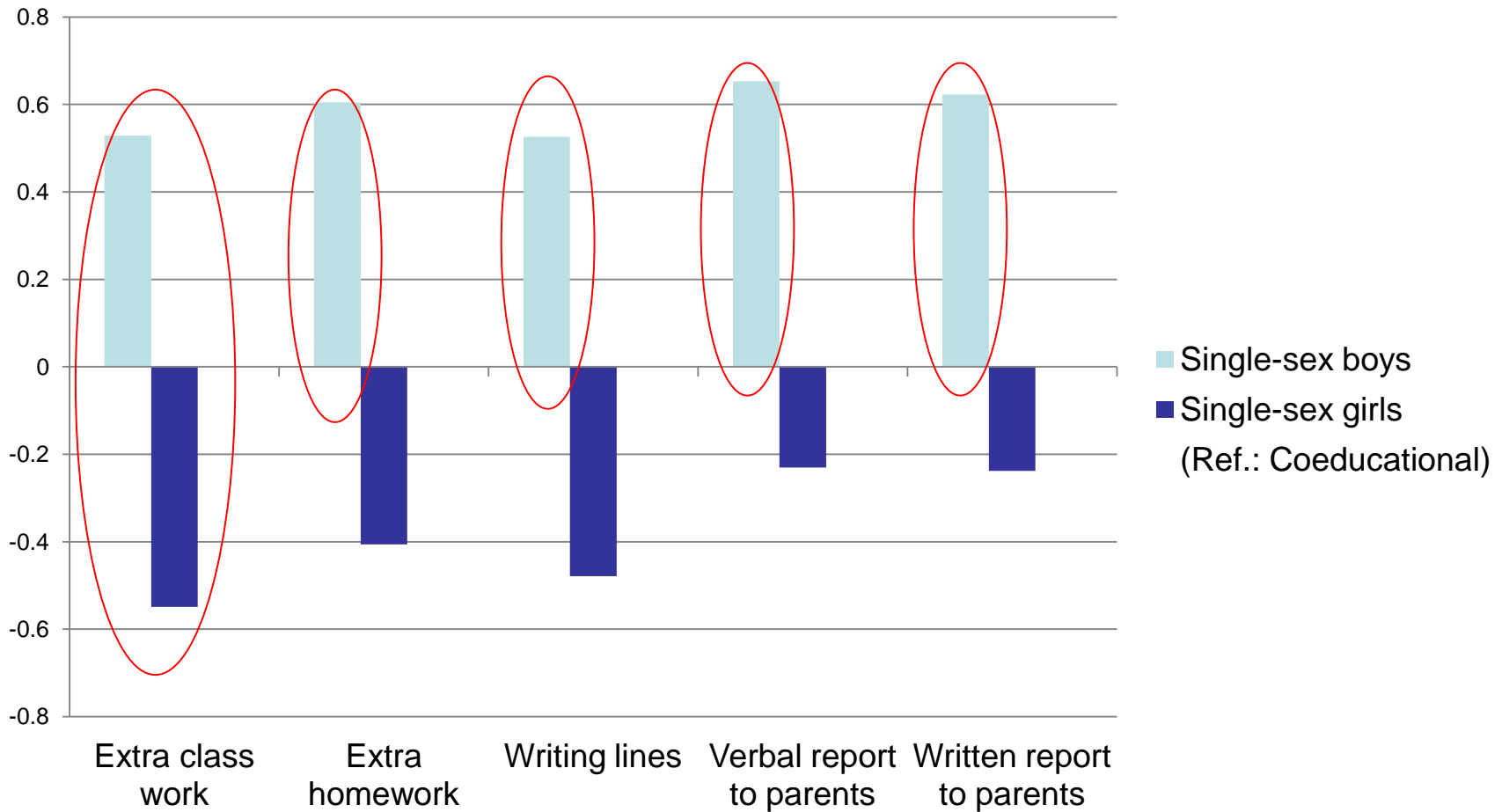
# Discipline types by school characteristics

Constant		Class work	Home work	Lines	Verbal report	Written report
DEIS status:	Urban band 1	0.432	-0.020	0.551±	1.295***	1.052***
	Urban band 2	0.615*	0.149	0.174	0.917**	0.738*
	Rural	0.021	-0.103	-0.022	-0.324	0.025
	(Ref.: Non-DEIS)					
Gender mix:	Single-sex boys	0.529*	0.605**	0.526*	0.653**	0.623**
	Single-sex girls (Ref.: Coeducational)	-0.549*	-0.406	-0.479±	-0.230	-0.238
Private school		-0.534	0.120	-21.124	1.081	0.964
Special school		-1.372**	-1.903***	-1.954**	0.928±	0.725
Language medium:	Gaelscoil	0.427	0.411	-0.091	1.242***	0.848**
	Gaeltacht (Ref.: English medium)	-0.602	-0.510	-1.063*	-0.732±	-0.510
Oversubscribed school		-0.036	0.133	-0.091	0.655***	0.509***
Male principal		0.355*	0.310*	0.384**	-0.243±	0.002
Emot /Beh problems:	<10%	0.222	0.202	0.135	0.652**	0.373±
	10-25%	0.511±	0.555*	-0.213	0.799**	0.450±
	>25% (Ref.: None)	-0.052	0.023	0.474	0.726±	0.898±

# Discipline by DEIS

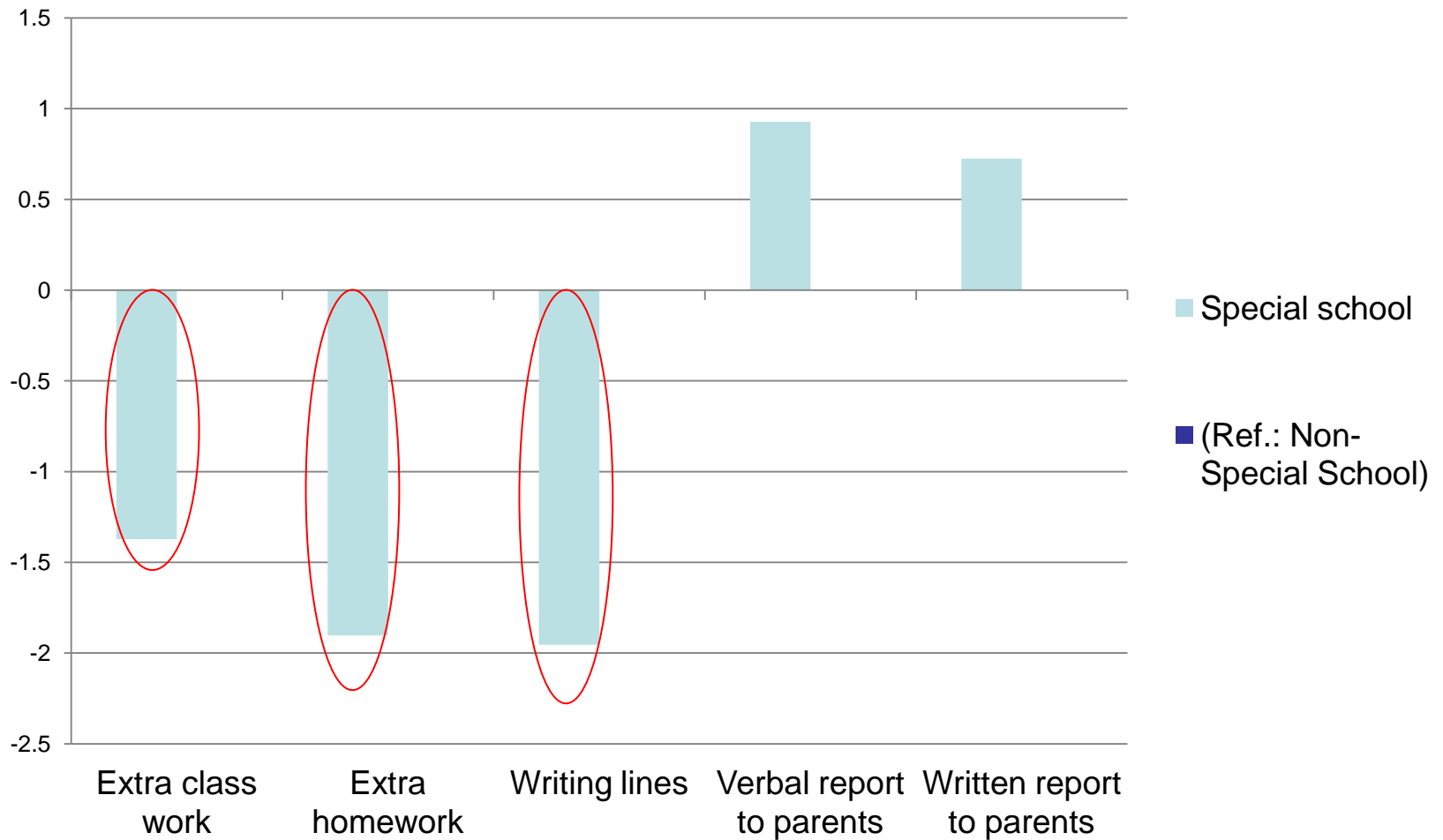


# Discipline by gender mix



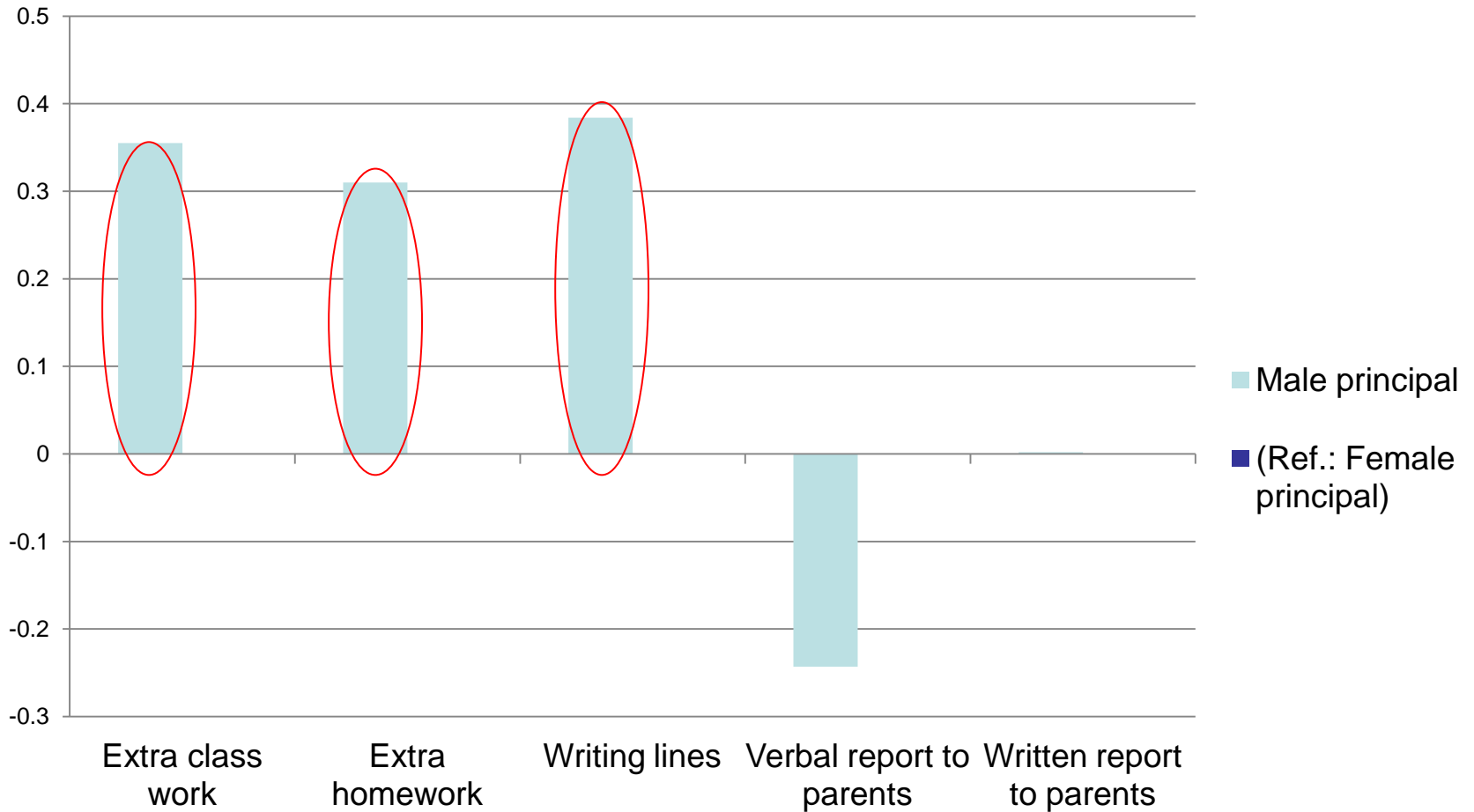


# Discipline by special school





# Discipline by principal gender



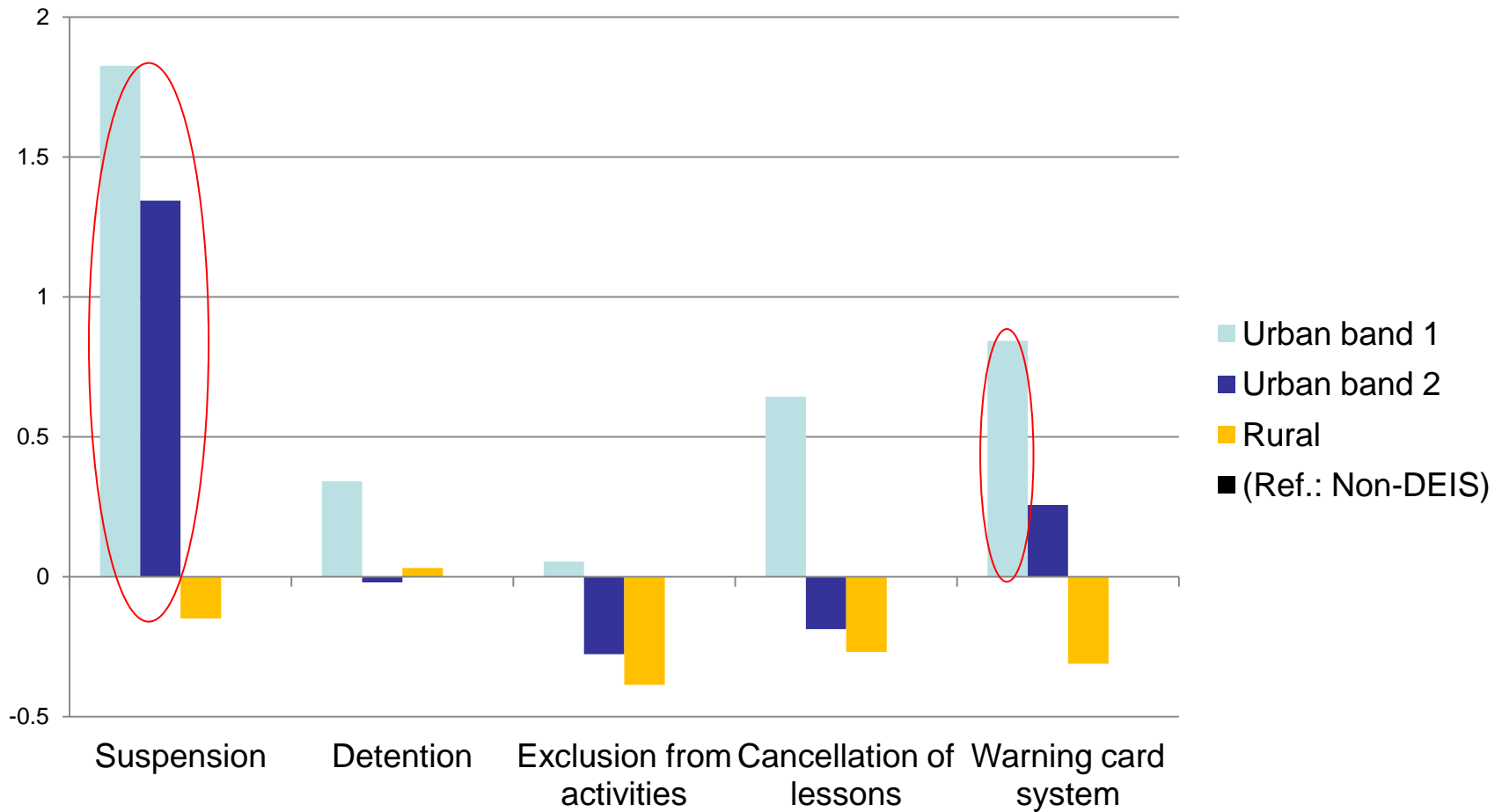


# Discipline types by school characteristics

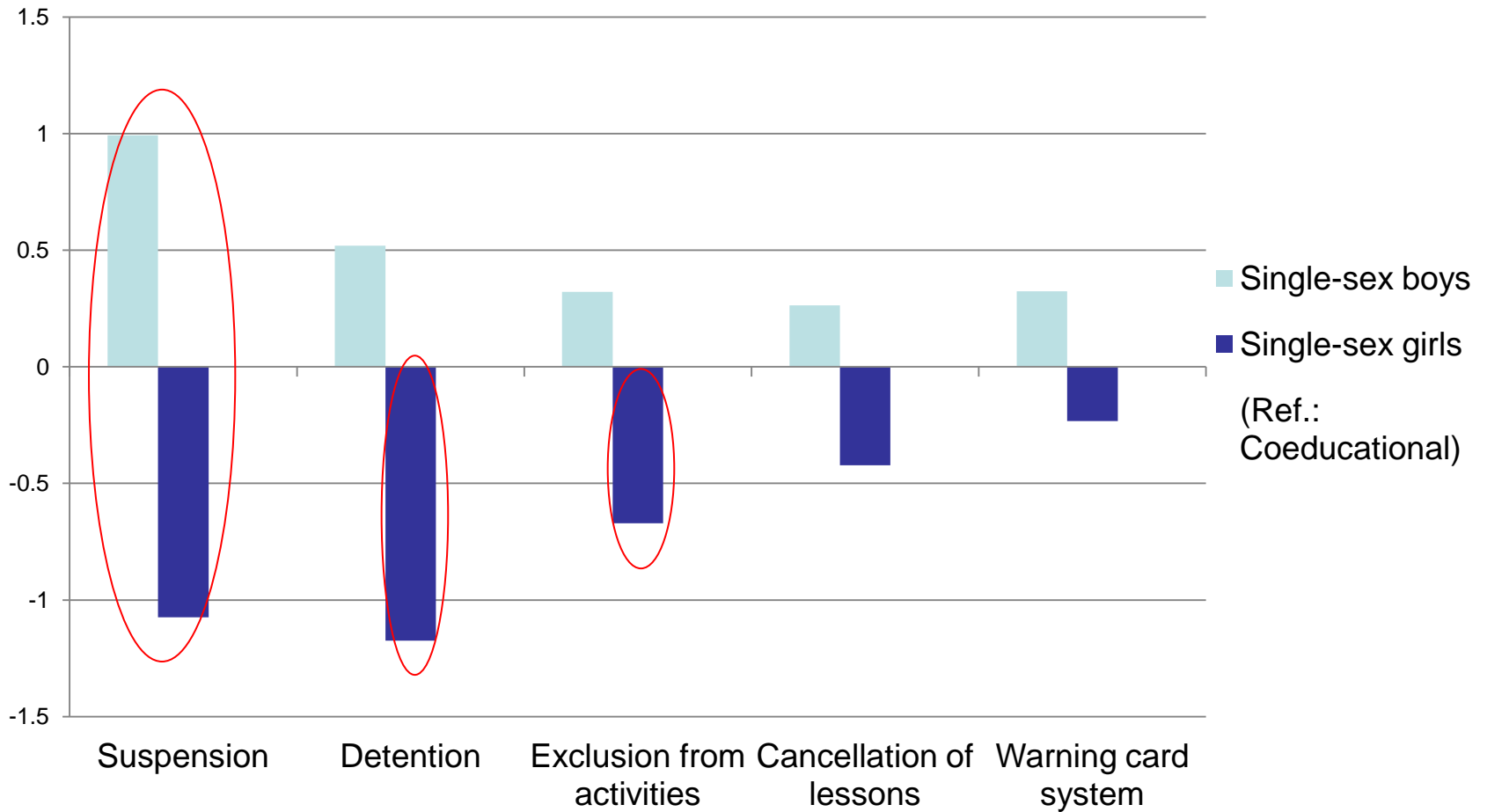
Constant		Suspension	Detention	Excl. from activities	Cancel lessons	Warning card
DEIS status:	Urban band 1	1.826***	0.341	0.054	0.644±	0.843*
	Urban band 2	1.344**	-0.020	-0.277	-0.187	0.256
	Rural	-0.149	0.031	-0.386	-0.269	-0.311
	(Ref.: Non-DEIS)					
Gender mix:	Single-sex boys	0.992***	0.519±	0.322	0.264	0.324
	Single-sex girls (Ref.: Coeducational)	-1.074***	-1.174***	-0.671*	-0.422±	-0.233
Private school		1.891±	-1.475	0.812	0.274	-0.875
Special school		0.383	-1.718*	-1.700*	-1.226±	-1.049
Language medium:	Gaelscoil	0.588	-1.100**	0.040	0.112	-0.050
	Gaeltacht (Ref.: English medium)	-0.825	-0.227	0.099	-0.003	-0.529
Oversubscribed school		0.492**	-0.371*	-0.188	-0.173	0.411*
Male principal		0.536**	0.329*	0.024	-0.228	0.046
Emot /Beh problems:	<10%	2.172***	0.639*	0.504±	0.485±	1.171**
	10-25%	2.358***	0.734*	0.603	-0.038	1.647***
	>25%	1.838*	1.031±	1.695*	0.857	2.306***
	(Ref.: None)					



# Discipline by DEIS

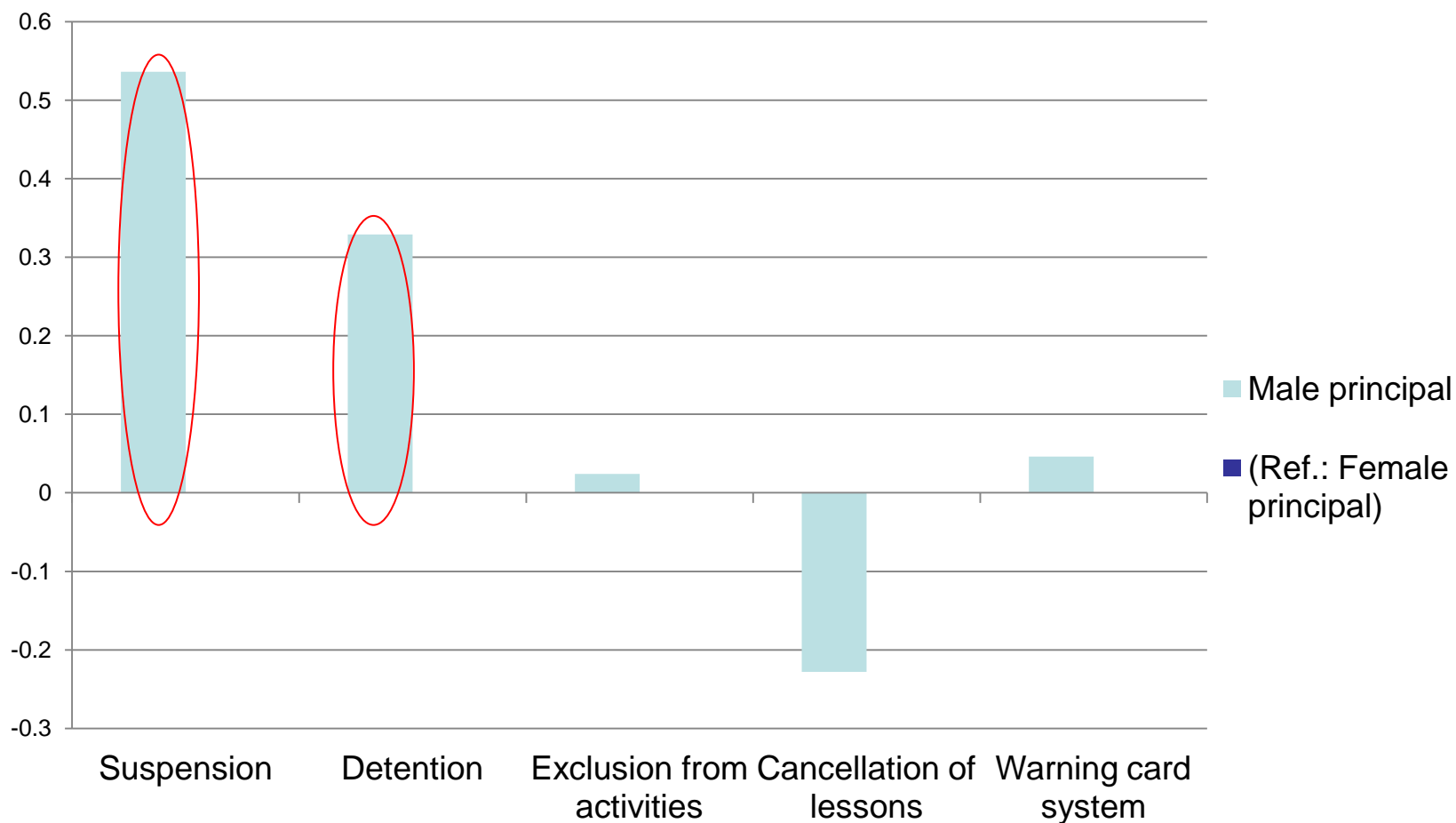


# Discipline by gender mix

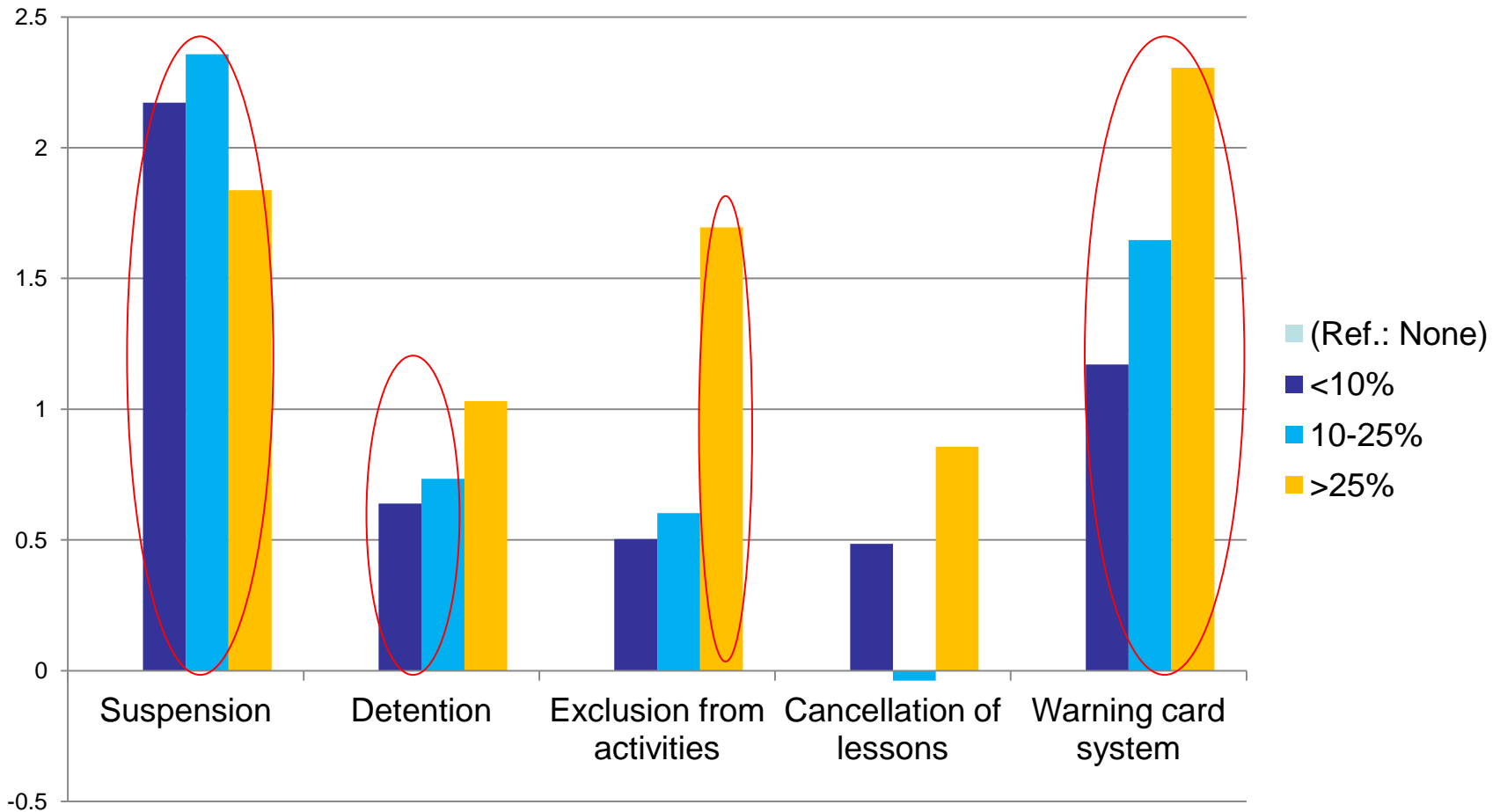




# Discipline by principal gender



# Discipline by emotional/behaviour problems





# Limitations

- **No information on reinforcing good behaviour**
- **No qualitative element – information on how school policy is translated into practice**



# Conclusions

- **Behaviour policy reflects the gender and social mix of the student body**
- **Gendered expectations in constructing appropriate disciplinary measures**
- **Male principals more likely to use more punitive measures**
- **Urban disadvantaged schools more likely to use a range of disciplinary measures**



**Thank you**

**Questions?**